

Power groups study capacity for 'back-bone' systems

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DENVER — Major western utilities and a federal agency announced last week that they will study and plan ways to increase capacity and strengthen the high-voltage "backbone" regional transmission system between Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona.

"Historically, the development of electric transmission has followed the announcement of new generating sources," Doug Jaeger, Xcel Energy vice president for transmission, said in a statement. "This study is unique in that we will develop a proactive plan to create the robust infrastructure needed to support renewable expansion and other generation necessary for Colorado and the surrounding region."

The entities that are part of the consortium are: Xcel Energy; Colorado Springs Utilities; Platte River Power Authority; Public Service Company of New Mexico; Salt River Project in Arizona; Trans-Elect Development Company; Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association; and the federal agency, the Western Area Power Administration.

Part of the study will include looking at whether five recently announced transmission projects can become part of coordinated plans for the region.

The first meeting of the High Plains Express Transmission Project Study, which is expected to be completed by August, will be Friday in Denver.